

RAAF Combis

Ian Champion saw the story on the VW Combis in Vol 28, he says: “Funny how reminiscing about the LAMVs brought back some memories, thought you might like to use them in the next edition.

There were three LAMVs at Pearce. That allowed for one to be deployed at Pearce, one at Gin Gin and one in maintenance.....or was that one for the WORAD’s personal use? LAMVs were slow, but they were faster than walking, required less effort than riding the Section treadly and they were air-conditioned. The



LAMVs were set up near the threshold of the active runway and manned by flying instructors who were monitoring student pilots on approach during their initial solo flights.

There was a flap at the rear driver’s side of the vehicle where we connected the umbilical cord for the landlines. From memory they had a PABX telephone and a Call/Answer Intercom to the tower. There was a micro-switch under the flap so that if you tried to drive off with the flap open the horn would sound. This was meant to prevent you driving off with the umbilical still plugged in. Apparently people had done this in the past because there was also a weak point in the posts at the LAMV sites which allowed them to snap off if you did. More often than not, the horn sounded because the Dzus fasteners that held the flap closed hadn’t been done up tight enough (or some smart ar**, usually another Base Radio Tech, had undone it as they walked past the van while it was parked outside Base Radio).

The LAMVs were speed limited (not governed though) to about 40 kph. It was quite daunting trundling along the taxiway to the threshold of the active runway at 40kph leading a procession of Macchis (or sometimes something bigger, pointier and faster; you didn’t want to get behind them!). The air conditioning was an afterthought and if you got the engine revs too high the drive belts would jump off the pulleys, which meant a trip to the MT Fitters to have them refitted and an awkward conversation with the Warrant Officer in charge of transport where you had to explain how/why the belts came off. Another problem was if you went over a bump too fast you ran the risk of the fan panel mounted in the rear window frame bouncing out.

The deal with deploying the LAMVs was that a Base Radio techo set the vehicle up near the threshold of the active runway and when the flying instructor came out the tech drove his vehicle back to 2FTS headquarters. On one occasion I’d set the LAMV up at the threshold of RWY 36, when the instructor arrived he noted there was no Call Sign sheet in the van, “No prob’s Sir, I’ll go get one”. I hot footed it back to 2FTS and got a call sign sheet from one of the Cadets in the crew room and headed back to Rwy 36. “That’s last month’s Corporal”. “Sorry Sir, they must have given me the wrong one”back to 2FTS Crew Room. “You gave me last month’s sheet, I need the current one”. At this point the CFI appeared on the scene....” You can go back to your section Corporal, the Cadet is going to run it out!!” Not a pleasant prospect: WA summer, late morning, 2FTS HQ to the threshold of Rwy 36, at the double,

wearing full flying kit and boots. Rather him than me. I wasn't even certain that the Cadet tasked with running it out was the one that stuffed up in the first place.

On another occasion an LAMV was paraded down St George's Terrace in Perth. I can't recall the event, but there was a big, tri-service parade through Perth. The SAS were there with their long-range reconnaissance vehicles (imagine LWB Land Rovers loaded up with steely-eyed killers, heaps of jerry cans and guns), there were also various other Army vehicles, some towing artillery pieces. The RAAF were represented by half a dozen or so flights of troops in blues, a pilot's course in flying suits with helmets under their arms (all very Top Gun stuff), a TFA, a TFR, a fly over of Macchis, and an LAMV. If memory serves me the LAMV crew that day were Paul Fedec and Tim Collins; the drive from Pearce to Perth would have been painfully slow, but I believe Tim made the most of it by sitting in the "bubble" with a headset set on waving to the kids and calling in air strikes on passing motorists.



The tower techs did a morning check of the tower console to change lights globes etc before flying started. Steve Benz was in the tower doing the checks one morning. The Air Traffickers hadn't arrived yet and the ATIS hadn't been recorded. The pilot of a visiting Herc' preparing for departure came up.

Herc': Pearce Ground, Herc, request the weather.

Benzy replied with the QNH, temperature, wind speed and direction.

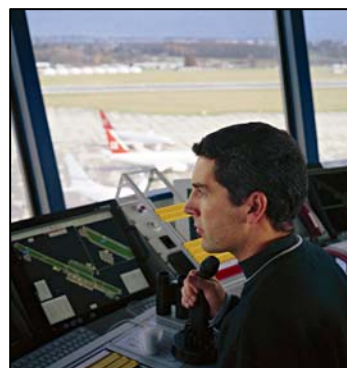
Herc': What about cloud cover?

Steve Benz (knowing nothing about judging cloud cover): There's a few little, white, puffy ones around.

Herc': You're not an Air Traffic Controller are you?

Steve Benz: Affirmative.

Benzy bolted before the Air Traffickers arrived and worked out who had been doing their job.



And one last one from Pearce, not on the airwaves this time but just as amusing. Kim Greenham was working on the Tower console. He had all the front and back panels off to gain access. Kim had his head buried in the back of the console while a female Air Trafficker was sitting on the other side swivelling from side to side on her stool. Kim was looking straight through the console at her nether regions. An embarrassed Kim's head appears over the top of the console "Excuse me Ma'am but could you please turn your stool about 45 degrees and keep still, I'm having difficulty concentrating". I wasn't witness to that one, but Kim's partners in crime told me the story.

Those that knew Richmond might remember the Black and Yellow chequered International Scouts 4WDs that the Air Traffickers used back around 1974/75, their call-signs were Scout 1 and Scout 2.

The Air Traffickers carried out regular runway checks during the day; apparently one of these checks had just been completed when I heard this radio exchange:

*“Tower, Tower,
Scout, Scout,
A runway check has been carried out,
To your delight, and mine too,
The surface is good
Through and through.”*

On another occasion, while waiting to cross the runway to the QuadRADAR Site to fix a fault we had the following exchange:

Quad Combi: *Richmond Ground, Quad Combi, clearance to cross the active to Quad Site.*
Richmond Ground: *Quad Combi, hold.*
Richmond Ground: *Scout, Ground,and a ham and salad roll , two pies, a bucket of chipsetc*
Scout: *Roger that.*
Richmond Ground: *Quad Combi cross the active.*

This was just after the Air Traffickers had given me a bollicking about improper use of the radio. I guess you gotta get your priorities right.

Then there was the Air Trafficker who U/S'd the whole Tower time system because it didn't say the same time as the U-beaut Seiko watch that he'd just brought back from Singapore. We had to rip the Master Clock unit out and send it back to RACAL for calibration. Meanwhile the Air Traffickers had to “manually” record the time every now and again to get a “time stamp” on the tapes. Presumably they were using their Seiko watches to get the time.



Watching M.A.S.H the other night RADAR O'Reilly said to Hawkeye Pierce

“Sometimes I wish I could be like all the other guys. You know, go out, get drunk, tell lies to strange women, then come home, go to work without any sleep and throw up all day”.

That too brought back a few memories

Bob Dorsett also saw the story, he says, I have not seen this configuration, but in 1976/77 114 had a Kombi, Yellow and White with a VW powered generator on a trailer. The vehicle was called a SOTS Vehicle (Strip Operations ***) It was a mobile Control Tower. Two seats and entry was from a sliding door on the passenger side. You would duck in and climb onto swivel chairs set around 1.5m off the deck. The drivers side had a pair of batwing doors, that opened onto equipment bays with mute amps (what's a mute amp?? – tb) and radios etc at floor level up for on third the width of vehicle. The trailer had a pair of fiber-glass boxes with removable lids and stake down points. A spool of 3/4 inch steel wound cable ended into a plug that could plug into the wing root of a mirage. The other end came back to SOTS. It had a Telephony IDF we used to run 10 or 20 pair to pre-terms around different locations on Amberley hardstand. The pre-terms went back to 114 MCRU.

The Kombi was not a bubble config like shown. It had a roof larger than the cut out in the roof and inward sloping flat windows. The passenger seat was replaced by a 50V set of 2C NiCad batteries. It seated two people in the "Tower" on swivel chairs at a tower console.

It was a mongrel to set up for use as the Mute amps always needed rebalancing. Tom McIntyre and Bob Crawford also worked on hem, in their Corporal days.

Mick Ryan also saw the story we had on the "Barber poled" Combis in our last edition, he says:

"The Red and White 'candy striped' Volkswagens were known to a lot of us ex Groundies from Pearce as an LAMV (Landing Approach Monitoring Vehicle). They were positioned by the 'Duty Tech's' mostly at night during Night Flying at the end of the active runway for the Duty Pilot Instructor to monitor cadet Pilot 'Touch and Goes'.

Under the perspex dome were two swivel chairs, a couple of PRC-41 UHF Transceivers, and Intercom to the Control Tower connected by an umbilical cord to a junction box on a bitumen pad near the piano keys.

On a dark night in 1972, as an AC Duty Tech in training, I was with a CPL Norton when we were requested by the Control Tower at 2000hrs to site the LAMV at site 18. There were approx 20 Macchis in circuit so the night was full of Runway, Taxi, and Aircraft lights and noise. We had to fire up a PRC-41 to the Surface Movement Control Frequency and request clearance from the Control Tower to cross Runway 05 to get the LAMV to site 18. The Tower came back barely readable with something like "ShpeerXXmission". CPL Norton asked me if it sounded like "permission" and I agreed. So we crossed the runway only to find there was a Macchi on Finals which had to overshoot. Needless to say we were in trouble.



We got the dreaded flashing White light from the tower (Report directly to the Tower) after flying had ceased and were severely briefed by the Senior Air Traffic Controller and told to study the AAP on Radio Operational Procedures. Some things you never forget and this is one. Radio voice procedures never use the word "PERMISSION" but do use "HOLD POSITION".

And – The RAAF News, which was published on the 10th July 2008, had the story of FSgt Bruce Walker who is restoring one of these little busses and which started all this. You can read it [HERE](#)

IF MY BODY WERE A CAR...

Jenny Abbott, who was Jenny Wren when she was at Laverton back in the 60's, also sent us this.



If my body was a car, this is the time I would be thinking about trading it in for a newer model. I've got bumps and dents and scratches in my finish and my paint job is getting a little dull ...

But that's not the worst of it. My headlights are out of focus and it's especially hard to see things up close. My traction is not as graceful as it once was. I slip and slide and skid and bump into things even in the best of weather.

My whitewalls are stained with varicose veins. It takes me hours to reach my maximum speed and my fuel rate burns inefficiently.

But here's the worst part -- Almost every time I sneeze, cough or sputter, either my radiator leaks or my exhaust backfires!

B-1B Belly Landing.

Ron Faux

When you need full power to taxi, you know there's something wrong.....

On the 8th May 2006, a 7th Bomber Wing [B-1B Lancer](#) based at Dyess AFB, Texas, made a wheels-up landing at Diego Garcia, skidding 7,500 feet down the runway. The aircraft was landing at the end of an 11 hour ferry mission that started at Andersen AFB, Guam. During the landing, the B-1B caught fire and emergency crews extinguished the flames. The four-person aircrew escaped from the plane through the overhead escape hatch. The aircraft was finally removed from the runway 4 days later.

The US Air Force Accident Investigation concluded the pilots **forgot** to lower the landing gear. The USAF estimated the damage to the B-1B at \$7.9 million, and the damage to the runway at \$14,025. RBRM and those old SEABEES made one tough runway, that's for sure!

For those of you who've never seen a \$285,000,000 bomber spread eagled on the deck, here she is:



When you bounce a cheque, why do banks charge a fee for 'insufficient funds' when they know there is not enough money in the account to pay the fee?



